

ACADEMIC COUNCIL REPORT

SESSION:Public **ACTION REQUESTED:**Decision
Discussion/Direction
Information Financial Impact Yes NoIncluded in Budget Yes No**TO:** Academic Council**DATE:** January 25, 2022**PRESENTED BY:** Niall O'Halloran, Policy and Compliance Advisor**SUBJECT:** Written Policy Consultation Opportunity: Expense Procedures

ACADEMIC COUNCIL MANDATE:

In accordance with Article 1.3(b) of By-law No. 2, the Academic Council will be consulted in writing on the establishment of Administrative Policies; as is reflected in the Policy Framework.

The Finance department presents the attached Expense Procedures to Academic Council (AC) for written comment, as part of the consultation process.

BACKGROUND/CONTEXT & RATIONALE:

The existing Expense Procedures, while last updated in 2017, have not been fundamentally reviewed for some time prior to that. There have been longstanding comments from users (staff, Faculty, etc) that the Procedures were unclear, inconsistent, and out of date. Further, the tri-agency (the three major Federal funders of research) moved to a model where there would be increased reliance on institutional policy from an expense perspective.

These factors contributed to Finance initiating a fundamental review of the Expense Procedures starting in 2019.

The goal in updating the Procedure is to maintain the highest standard for governance, while adding clarification to the users of this Procedure to make the process easier and more efficient to process expenses.

The documents incorporate elements of Ontario Tech's current policies and procedures, as well as additions modelled on policies and procedures from other Canadian universities. Of note the updated draft version of the procedure was reviewed by the Ministry of Education during our recent audit on governance. The auditors had a couple of recommendations but were satisfied with the updated Expense procedures/policy.

The list of amendments is extensive. Finance took a view that the expense procedures should be as liberal as possible, within the bounds of legislation (BPS, GAAP). Changes include allowing additional types of expenses where appropriate, clarifying responsibilities, defining the period of travel, incorporating guidance regarding payments to indigenous individuals, clarifying when hospitality is appropriate (as well as the types of hospitality that may be extended and approvals), etc.

ALIGNMENT WITH MISSION, VISION, VALUES & STRATEGIC PLAN:

Having a robust, clear, and understandable expense guideline – that promotes transparency, efficient and effective use of funds and good governance is clearly aligned with the overall mission, values, and strategic plan.

CONSULTATION:

- Extensive consultation was conducted throughout 2019 - 2021. Further, Finance receives input on the expense 'rules' on an ongoing basis, in the course of processing claims and interacting with users. Formal consultation was held with all of the DPOs, department heads, and representatives from each faculty (on matters of particular relevance to research). The attached proposals were discussed with the Policy Advisory Committee (September 24, 2021).

COMPLIANCE WITH POLICY/LEGISLATION:

The proposed Procedures comply with both Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP) and the Broader Public Sector Expense Directive.

HOW TO COMMENT:

- Academic Council members can provide written comments by email to policy@ontariotechu.ca. Comments will be shared with the relevant Policy Owner for consideration.
- The comment period will be open until 3:00 pm on February 4, 2022.

NEXT STEPS:

- Academic Council members can provide written comments by email to policy@ontariotechu.ca.
- A summary of comments on each instrument will be provided to the relevant deliberative body and approval authority.

MOTION FOR CONSIDERATION:

- N/A

SUPPORTING REFERENCE MATERIALS:

- Expense procedures

Expenses Procedures

Classification number	ADM 1315.01
Parent policy	Expenses Policy
Framework category	Administrative
Approving authority	Vice President Administration
Policy owner	Vice President Administration
Approval date	
Review date	
Last updated	
Supersedes	

Purpose

1. The purpose of these Procedures is to define and guide the authorization and reimbursement of expenses at the University in a clear, transparent and equitable manner, and in accordance with the Expenses Policy and broader regulatory requirements.

Definitions

2. For the purposes of these procedures the following definitions apply:

“Approver” means the person with the authority to make approvals under this Policy and the associated Procedures. This is normally the manager/supervisor or budget holder of the Claimant. Research-related travel must also be approved by the Principal Investigator (PI) or their delegate.

“Broader Public Sector (BPS)” means those organizations who receive government transfer payments to provide services to the public. These include: colleges, universities, school

boards, hospitals, long-term care facilities, community care access centres and children's aid societies.

“Claimant” means any person making a claim under the terms of this Policy and the associated Procedures.

“Gifts” are non-monetary items purchased for an individual in recognition of special circumstances.

“Hospitality” means the provision of food, beverage, accommodation, transportation and other amenities.

“Meeting Expenses” means the provision of food, beverage, transportation, room rental and other related expenses to University employees, any other BPS organizations, or any of the other Ontario government ministries, agencies or public entities for business purposes.

“Original Itemized Receipt” means a document from the vendor itemizing the goods and/or services received, and the cost per unit of each good and/or service. A "tear-tag" showing the total charge is not considered an Original Itemized Receipt. Credit card and charge slips are only considered an Original Itemized Receipt if they provide the detailed itemization mentioned above.

“Per Diem” is a set daily allowance for meals expenses that does not require supporting documentation (i.e. receipts).

“Sponsor” means the provider of funds for specific activities, including both external and internal sources.

“University Member” means any individual who is:

- Employed by the University;
- Registered as a student, in accordance with the academic regulations of the University;
- Holding an appointment with the University, including paid, unpaid and/or honorific appointments; and/or
- Otherwise subject to University policies by virtue of the requirements of a specific policy (e.g. Booking and Use of University Space) and/or the terms of an agreement or contract.

Scope and authority

3. These Procedures apply to all University business related expenditures from all sources of funding administered by the University, including research.
4. The Vice President Administration, or successor thereof, is the Policy Owner and is responsible for overseeing the implementation, administration and interpretation of these Procedures.

Procedures

5. General

- 5.1 Business claims and expense reimbursements may be audited; subsequent audit adjustment of expenses may result in recovery from claimants. Further, any overpayment to claimants will be recovered by the University. Such adjustments will be arranged on a case-by-case basis in consultation with the claimant. All expenditures must have sufficient appropriate supporting documentation. Examples of supporting documentation include:
 - a. Offsite meetings require independently verifiable evidence regarding attendees, location, date and time, and reason for the meeting.
 - b. Conferences and seminars require a copy of the agenda or prospectus or other proof of attendance. A copy of a 'conference name badge' is not necessary.
 - c. Hotel accommodations require a copy of the detailed bill.
 - d. Flights require a copy of the purchase receipt. A copy of the boarding pass is not necessary.
- 5.2 Expenditures from externally-funded research Sources (e.g. a research grant) must:
 - a. Be necessary and contribute to the direct costs of the research/activities for which the funds were awarded, with benefits directly attributable to the grant
 - b. Not be provided by the administering institution to their research personnel
 - c. Be effective and economical
 - d. Not result in personal gain for members of the research team

- 5.3 Further information on these criteria can be found in the Tri-Agency Guide on Financial Administration. This policy is applied in conjunction with any more specific stipulations that may be a part of externally funded research. Expenditures from internally-funded research sources – including ‘professional development allowance’ and start-up funds, do not need to demonstrate that the cost is direct, as set out in 5.2(a). To illustrate, costs related to a thesis defense are normally not direct costs of research and, accordingly, are to be funded by eligible internal research funds.
- 5.4 As set out by the Signing Authority Policy and Procedures, one-over-one approval is required for all expense reimbursements.
- 5.5 Expenditures should always support the most economical and efficient use of public funds, unless otherwise noted in this procedure or the applicable research agreement.
- 5.6 Gratuities - In cases where a gratuity is a customary and normal part of business, a maximum of 15% before tax is permitted as a gratuity.

6. **Responsibilities and Approvals**

- 6.1 The claimant is responsible for:
- a. Manual claims, ensuring approvals are obtained;
 - b. Including appropriate descriptions for the purpose or the nature of expenses;
 - c. Ensuring that expenses are allowable within applicable policy, procedure or requirements (e.g. the terms of a grant, agreement, or award);
 - d. Submitting appropriate documentation to justify the expense, including the cost effectiveness of arrangements made for travel;
 - e. Claiming reimbursement for actual out-of-pocket expenses incurred for legitimate University business purposes only; and,
 - f. Submitting claims within 1 month of expenditure and, where possible, on a comprehensive basis, i.e. all relevant expenses related to a single trip should be included on a single claim. Individuals who resign from the University must submit all expense claims prior to departure.
- 6.2 The approver is responsible for:

- a. Validating that the expenses are both reasonable and legitimate in the context of University business; and,
- b. Ensuring that expenses claimed are in accordance with University policy.

6.3 Principal Investigators submitting travel claims are responsible for ensuring that expenses have been incurred for legitimate research purposes and are eligible expenses under the research project.

7. **Travel-Related Expenses**

7.1 Claimants will be reimbursed for the most direct and economical method of travel. For clarity, entry visa fees are eligible expenditures.

7.2 The following travel-related expenses are not reimbursable:

- a. Expenses related to a person's regular commute to work;
- b. Additional costs for travelling with a companion, sightseeing, 'no show' charges or charges related to changes to travel arrangements unless incurred as a result of business-related circumstances or extenuating personal circumstances, and unused or lost tickets; and,
- c. Expenses related to ancillary costs of travel, e.g. cost of a passport or luggage.

7.3 For travel related to conference(s), the eligible travel period (i.e. the period for which expenses may be claimed) includes the day prior to the conference to the day after the conference.

7.4 On occasion, the timing of conferences or travel may necessitate that the traveler stays abroad during the interim period. For example, a conference in one location overseas followed by another conference in the same general vicinity within a few days. Costs associated with the interim period (i.e. the time between conferences) are eligible expenditures provided that they are less than the costs of returning home. The traveler must provide documentation of the return travel costs as compared to staying as part of the supporting documentation. Failure to provide this information will result in costs associated with the interim period being ineligible.

7.5 The maximum amount of time that may be claimed for travel in any one location, including while on sabbatical, is 1 month (30 days). After such time a traveler will be deemed to be 'sojourning', i.e. deemed to have taken up temporary residence in that location.

8. **Transportation Related Expenses**

- 8.1 Claimants will ensure that, within the reasonable options available, the most economical mode of transportation selected. For air travel, unless the exception noted below applies, economy fare (or equivalent international standard) is the standard option for ticket purchase. Trip cancellation insurance is an eligible expenditure. International travel with flight times greater than 9 hours are eligible for upgraded fare (i.e. higher than economy), with pre-approval from the Claimant's one-over-one.
- 8.2 The University will reimburse for costs associated with advance seat selection.

Personal and Rental Vehicles

- 8.3 Claimants are encouraged to use their University Purchasing Card when renting a vehicle for business-related purposes.
- 8.4 Rental vehicles are only an eligible cost for research when they are required for fieldwork. It is expected that a Claimant who is at a single location for an extended period of time does not require a rental vehicle for research purposes.
- 8.5 Unless justified through exceptional circumstances, only costs for compact or intermediate models or their equivalent will be eligible for vehicle rental.
- 8.6 Employees are insured under the BMO Travel Protection Plan, accordingly, the cost of additional insurance on rental vehicles will not be reimbursed.
- 8.7 Reimbursement will be provided for necessary and reasonable expenditures such as fuel, parking and toll charges. To avoid higher gasoline charges, rental cars must be refueled before returning it.
- 8.8 Personal Vehicles: In situations where a Claimant chooses to use their own vehicle, the kilometric claim is measured using the individual's home or Ontario Tech, whichever is closer to the destination. Eligible costs for the use of a personal vehicles include:
- a. Kilometric rate of \$0.50;
 - b. Parking costs; and,
 - c. Toll costs.

9. **Accommodation-Related Expenses**

9.1 Accommodation

- a. Eligible expense claims for accommodation consists of the cost of single accommodation in a standard room. Other costs (e.g. rentals, spa) will not be reimbursed.
- b. In the normal conduct of business, reimbursement for overnight accommodation within 80 km of the University will be neither authorized nor approved; however, in emergency or highly unusual situations, exceptions will be considered with prior approval of the relevant Vice-President.
- c. Penalties incurred for non-cancellation of guaranteed hotel reservations are the Claimant's responsibility and may be reimbursed only in an exceptional circumstance.

9.2 Telecommunications - Reimbursement will be made for reasonable costs associated with telecommunications and internet services while travelling. These include, but are not limited to, business calls, necessary personal calls, and internet connections. Individuals with a University provided cell phone are to contact the IT department to arrange appropriate cellphone coverage while traveling.

9.3 Private Stays

- a. Accommodation: Where employees make private arrangements for accommodation (e.g. staying with friends, relatives or colleagues), an amount up to \$30.00 CAD per night is allowed, with no requirement for receipts.
- b. Incidentals: An incidental expense allowance of \$15.00 can be claimed for personal expenses for each full day (24 hours) on travel status, with no requirement for receipts.

10. Meal-Related Expenses

10.1 Per diem allowance or actual costs may be claimed for meals when on a University business trip. Claimants must be consistent between which methodology they choose on any particular trip. When the actual costs are claimed, detailed receipts from the restaurant are required. Limits for both the per diem and receipted basis are outlined in Appendix A. Per diem rates are inclusive of taxes and gratuities.

10.2 Meal expenses are not generally eligible if they are included as part of a conference or hotel accommodation.

10.3 Claims for meal expenses will only be reimbursed if the Claimant is:

- a) On University business; or,
- b) Working continuously for more than three hours beyond normal work hours; and,

Alcohol cannot be claimed and will not be reimbursed as part of a business, travel or meal expense.

11. Hospitality-Related Expenses

Hospitality may be appropriate when it facilitates University business, or is considered necessary as a matter of courtesy or protocol. Hospitality, such as beverages and meals, are only to be provided to employees who act as hosts to guests of the University.

11.1 When hospitality is appropriate, it is to be extended in an economical manner. The following instances may constitute acceptable instances of hospitality:

- a. Engaging in discussion of official public matters with, or sponsoring formal conferences for business and industry, public interest groups, or labour groups;
- b. Providing people from charitable organizations, or potential/existing donors with an understanding or appreciation of the workings of the University;
- c. Honoring distinguished people for exceptional public service;
- d. Conducting prestigious ceremonies for international and government officials, members of educational institutions or distinguished guests from the private sector;
- e. Where approved by the University President, pursuing commercial contracts/agreements;
- f. Inter-Agency Co-operation: Expenses are allowable for the costs of providing meals and refreshments to staff from other institutions, including Broader Public Service ('BPS') agencies, for discussions or conferences that seek to further either institutional or government objectives.
- g. Other hospitality functions as set out by this procedure.

11.2 Hospitality related to employee meetings must be limited to the specific situations set out in this procedure.

Hospitality for Guests

11.3 Hospitality expenses for guests are limited to the cost of meals and beverages. Other entertainment of a different variety (e.g. golf, athletic events, theatre productions, etc.) requires prior approval of the relevant Vice-President or equivalent..

11.4 Alcohol at Hospitality Events

- a. Authorization to serve alcohol at a hospitality event will be obtained from the University President in advance; such authorization cannot be delegated;
- b. Authorization to serve alcohol at a hospitality event that is hosted by the University President will be obtained in advance from the Chair of the University Board of Governors.

Hospitality for Employees

11.5 Employee Events - the following limitations are applied in regards to hospitality for University employees:

- a. Refreshments, meals, or both may be offered to employees who participate in work sessions that unavoidably extend beyond normal working hours. These expenses need to be pre-approved by the respective unit Vice-President or equivalent;
- b. Expenses related to planning or business meetings (retreats) held off-campus for University employees must be pre-approved by the President. This is intended to support strategic discussions led by senior leadership; and,
- c. Hospitality may be extended on behalf of the University when employees participate in strategic meetings of significance to the University. Such meetings are expected to be rare, and are to be pre-approved by the respective Vice-President or equivalent.

12 **Membership in Professional Organizations, Professional Dues/Fees, Subscription**

Expense claims may be made for membership in a professional organization, subscriptions, or professional dues when membership is primarily for business purposes. Subscriptions are also deemed business expenses when they are for publications related to the functions of an individual's position.

13 **Gifts**

- 13.1 In accordance with the definition of 'gifts', a gift cannot be cash or near-cash (i.e. a gift card). 'Gifts' do not include food cards provided by SAFA.
- 13.2 Expense claims may be made for gifts to an employee or an employee's immediate family, to a maximum of \$250, only to acknowledge:
- a. A long-term employee who is leaving a department or retiring;
 - b. An employee who is ill and requires hospitalization; or
 - c. An employee or an employee's immediate family member who has passed away.
- 13.3 Gifts cannot be paid from research funds to the following individuals:
- a. Member(s) of the grant team;
 - b. Collaborators; or,
 - c. Individuals who are performing a service (i.e. part of a contractual obligation or professional service)
- 13.4 In recognition of the cultures and traditions of First Nations, Metis, and Inuit, Elders and other Knowledge Keepers are eligible to receive gifts (including cash) in a ceremonial or other context.

14. **Consultants and Other Contractors**

Consultants and other contractors will not be reimbursed for any hospitality, incidental or food expenses including meals, snacks, beverages, gratuities, laundry or dry cleaning, valet services, dependent care, home management, and personal telephone calls, unless the contract specifically allows for it.

Monitoring and Review

15. These procedures will be reviewed as necessary and at least every three years. The Vice President Administration, or successor thereof, is responsible to monitor and review these procedures.

RELATED POLICIES, PROCEDURES & DOCUMENTS

16. Expenses Policy

Signing Authority Policy

Policy on the Use of Internal Research Funds

Policy on the Over-Expenditure of Research Funds

Records Management Policy

Records Classification and Retention Schedule

Credit Card Procedure

APPENDIX A

For per diems and receipted claims, the following limitations (expressed in Canadian dollars) are to be applied for claims within Canada and the USA :

Breakfast	20%	\$15.00
Lunch	30%	\$22.50
Dinner	50%	\$37.50
Maximum		\$75.00

Outside of Canada and USA Treasury board rates applies. These Rates, as adopted by the University, [can be found on the Treasury Board website: http://www.njc-cnm.gc.ca/directive/d10/v10/s98/en](http://www.njc-cnm.gc.ca/directive/d10/v10/s98/en)